

In the Claims:

This version of the claims supersedes all prior versions of the claims that have been entered by the Examiner.

1. (Currently Amended) A process for conditioning and conservation of meat products for long periods of time, without the need of a cold chain, including the steps of selecting and cutting meat into meat cuts or pieces, cutting up the meat pieces, if necessary, for removing fat and minor portions thereof, to obtain pieces having a size and weight within a uniform range, the process being characterized by the following steps:

- a) Injecting each piece of meat with a brine solution containing NaCl ~~in at least a concentration to reach a maximum of 20% of the weight of the injected piece of meat up to a maximum where 20% of the weight of the injected piece of meat is due to the brine;~~
- b) Once all the pieces of meat within a batch have been injected the meat is massaged for a period of time of within 8 to 24 hours under a reduced pressure of between 10" and 15" Hg and a reduced temperature of between 0°C and 3°C;
- c) Removing the batch from the massage machine and introducing each piece of meat into a sealed bag made of an impervious polymer, and subjecting the bagged meat to a cooking process in hot water until reaching a temperature of 70°C to 85°C measured in the core of the biggest piece of meat for a time of 15 to 30 minutes;
- d) Removing the bags with the meat from the cooking water, removing the meat from each bag and cooling the meat until reaching a temperature of about 26°C measured in the geometrical center of the pieces of meat;
- e) Once the cooling step has finished, packaging each pre-cooked piece of meat in other bags apt for vacuum packaging;

- f) Freezing the pieces of meat already conditioned to a temperature of about -14°C;
- g) Subjecting the already packaged and frozen pieces of meat to an irradiation process

until cumulating a minimum total does of 15kGy.

2. (Original) A process for conditioning and conservation of meat products for long periods of time, without the need of a cold chain, according to claim 1, the process being characterized in that the brine solution comprises 1.2 g/kg of sodium nitrite solution and 19.5 % of NaCl.

3. (Original) A process for conditioning and conservation of meat products for long periods of time, without the need of a cold chain, according to claim 1, the process being characterized in that the massage step is carried out under a reduced pressure of 15" Hg at 1°C for 8 hours.